Fabric Masterpiece

Written By: Tricia Mills Gray

TOOLS:

- Digital projector (1)
  like those used in office presentations. Just make sure it will work with your computer.

PARTS:

- Digital image of your desired painting (1)
  for best results, pick a piece that has large swaths of solid color, such as a cubist or modern painting. In other words, pointillism might not be the best choice.

- Foamboard (1)
  cut to the size of your desired result. This can be found at a craft store like Michaels.

- Thin posterboard (1)
  large enough for your desired result. If you can't find large enough pieces, you can tape them together to make the desired size. More poster-board can be layered for a 3D effect, if desired.

- Masking tape (1)
  or duct tape for taping posterboard.

- Ruler (1)
  or measuring tape.

- X-Acto knife (1)

for cutting foamboard.

- [Black sharpie (1)](#)

- [Scissors (1)](#)

  for cutting posterboard and fabric.

- [Double-stick cellophane tape (1)](#)

- [Fabric/craft glue (1)](#)

- [Yarn (1)](#)

  or other border fabrics for outlining shapes and details.

- [Fabric (1)](#)

  Different colors and textures of fabric to replicate the different paint colors. I recommended using fabric that is thin enough to fold easily, without being too sheer. I found mine at Joann Fabric and Craft.

- [Stick pins (1)](#)

  for holding pieces in place.

- [Paintbrush (1)](#)

  very small, for gluing yarn to pieces.

- [Frame (1)](#)

 *to fit the piece once finished, without glass.*

SUMMARY

When it comes to decorating, I picture exactly what I want, then refuse to settle for less. Take my living room. After a year of finding the perfect furniture, I wanted to craft one last piece to complete my vision. I was inspired by a gorgeous print I saw in a restaurant, a colorful, cubist painting of musicians by Emanuel Vardi.

I saw on TV how to stretch fabric on a canvas as an alternative to framed art. Could I pay homage to the Vardi piece and recreate it as a fabric collage? With the help of my laptop and a digital projector, I did just that.

Note: Make sure to seek permission when recreating someone else's art — it's not only the law, but you'd expect the same in return.

Step 1 — Create your canvas.
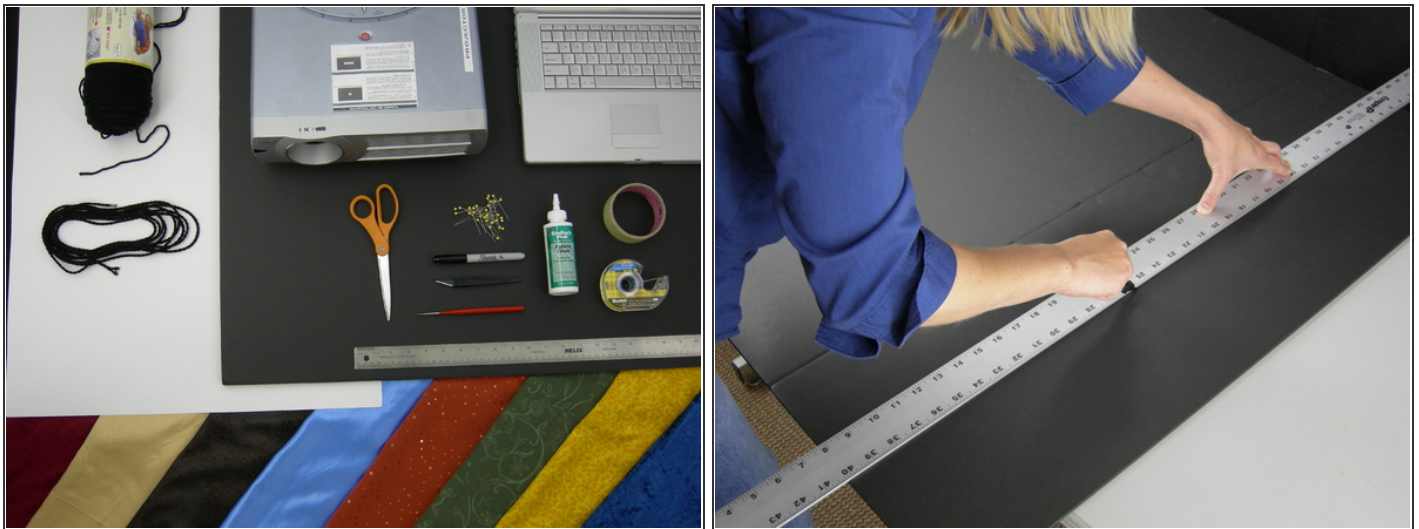
- Your collage can be as big or small as you want. However, make sure that the aspect ratio remains constant so your picture looks right. For instance, the digital image of my Vardi painting was 507 pixels wide by 337 pixels high, making the aspect ratio 507/337 = approximately 1.5. Since I wanted my "painting" to be 45" wide to fit on my wall, my canvas needed to be 45" wide by 30" high, to keep the aspect ratio the same (45/30 = 1.5).

- Once you've calculated your dimensions, measure them out on the foamboard and posterboard with a ruler, then cut them to size using the X-Acto knife. If the posterboard is not big enough, use the masking tape to tape 2 or 3 pieces together. I wanted to create 3 layers — the background, the yellow halo background, and the musicians themselves — so I repeated the posterboard sizing 3 times. The decision to use layers is up to you.

Step 2 — Trace the painting.

- Using masking or duct tape, tape your posterboard "canvas" to a wall. Then connect your computer to the projector, and project your digital image onto the posterboard. You will need to adjust the distance of the projector to ensure that your image fits perfectly onto the posterboard. In addition, be sure the projector is not tilted, or the image will be distorted.

- Using a Sharpie, trace the projected painting image onto the posterboard. Your tracing marks will be used as a guide for cutting out shapes, and later for yarn placement in details such as the violin and cello on my Vardi piece.

- Because I used 3 layers, I traced only the background on the first posterboard piece, then the halo backgrounds on the second piece, and finally, the musicians themselves on the third. Use your own stylistic judgment in places that seem ambiguous. For example, on the background layer, I connected lines that were covered up by the musicians, and I left out some of the lines that were not necessary on the cello. After all, this is your rendition.

Step 3 — Cut out your patterns.
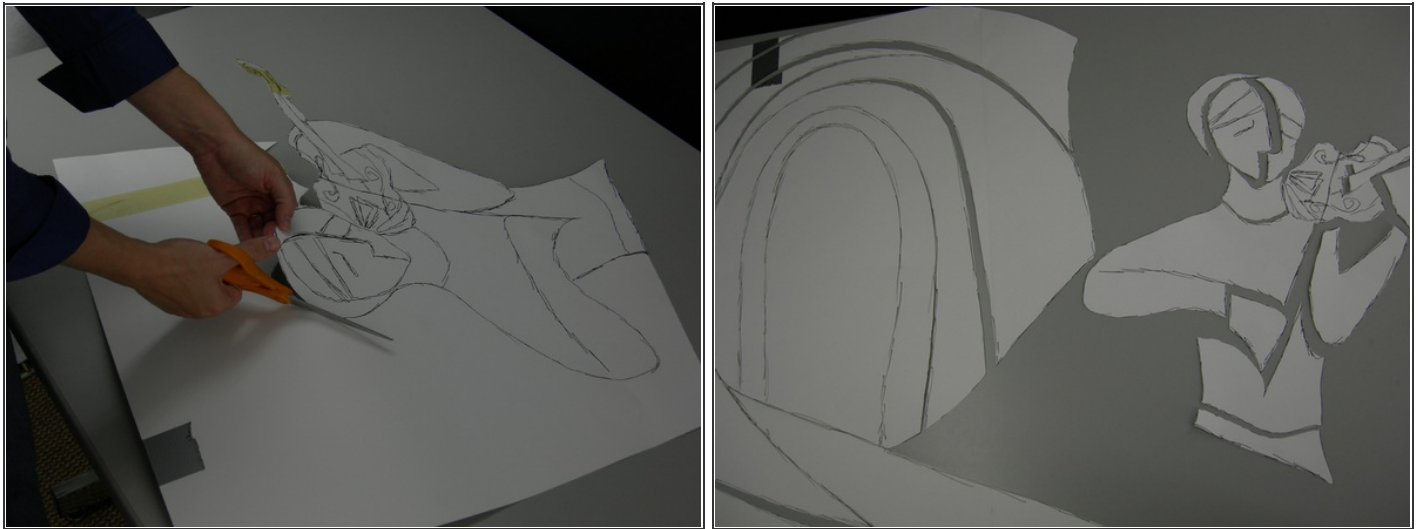
- Using scissors, cut along your trace lines to create patterns for your fabric. Because you'll be using each pattern piece for a different fabric, take care not to create pieces too small for the fabric to wrap around. For smaller details, such as those on the musicians' eyes, leave them intact for yarn detailing later.

Step 4 — Paint your patterns with fabric.
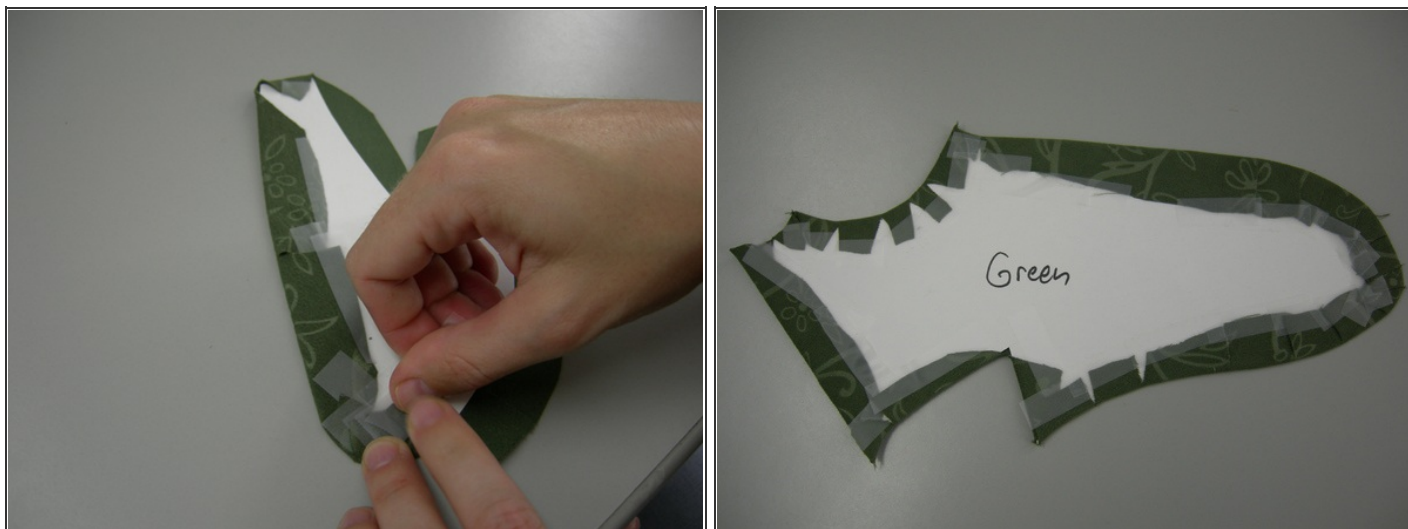
- For each cutout pattern, choose your desired color/texture of fabric, place it upside-down on your work surface, then place the pattern face down on the fabric, using double-stick tape to keep it in place. Trace a border on the fabric approximately 1⁄2" inch beyond the pattern on all sides and cut out the fabric piece.

- Note: to prevent confusion, you may want to make a note of which color fabric you'll use on the back of each piece.

Step 5 — Assemble the puzzle.

- Place the fabric-covered pattern pieces on the foamboard canvas to assemble your painting. Because the fabrics have different thicknesses, there may be small gaps or slight overlapping when you put the pieces back together. Don't worry! The small flaws will be covered when you border the pieces with yarn, etc. Just be sure that the outside edges of the painting pieces are in line with the foamboard as much as possible.

- When you're satisfied with how your pieces fit together, use the fabric/craft glue to attach the pieces to the foamboard. Once they are glued down, place something heavy on each piece to keep it flat as the glue dries. If there are layers to your picture, be sure the bottom layer is completely dry before gluing the next layer on. Let the whole thing dry for at least 24 hours before continuing.

Step 6 — Secure your borders.

- For the borders of your fabric pieces, use the small paintbrush to paint a tiny line of fabric glue around the edges of your patterns. Then, carefully place the yarn or other border along the glue line to secure it in place. I used regular black yarn for the musicians and instruments, and a fancier black cable border for the background pieces.

- Note: you can buy cable, lace, and other fabric borders by the yard at any fabric store.

- For the details, first examine the piece for any black marker lines that can be seen through the fabric. If you can see them, then use those lines as a guide to paint your fabric glue. If you can't, you may need to project the digital image on your piece again to trace the details onto the fabric before you paint the glue line. Then place the yarn along the glue design, using the stick pins to help with placement as necessary. Once the glue has dried just enough for the yarn to stay in place, take out the stick pins and, if needed, place a heavy object on the designs to keep them flat as they dry.

Step 7 — Frame your masterpiece.

- A beautiful frame not only adds a stylish and professional touch to your fabric painting, it also keeps the foamboard from warping and provides an easy way to hang your piece. If you can find the correct size frame, simply mount the piece as you would any picture.

- If this is not possible, as in my case, take it to a framing shop to have it custom framed. Price depends on size and type of frame. I had mine framed at Michaels for about $80.

- Now it's time to enjoy your results. Not only have you recreated your favorite painting into your own masterpiece, but you've also been able to customize the size, colors, and texture to fit perfectly, in both your home and your budget. And it was fun.

This project first appeared in [CRAFT Volume 02](#), pages 70-75.

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